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## DIFFERENT SOURCES FOR DIFFERENT TOPICS

**INFORMATION LITERACY** is the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information. Living in the Information Age, we are inundated with information overload – too much information. Training and practice are needed to hone skills in finding, analyzing and using information. One of the best sources for this training is the library. The support you receive there will give you confidence in using information to make a decision or create a product. Using a variety of sources makes research more credible and helps researchers improve their skills.

### GETTING STARTED

Sources of information include books, newspapers, journals and magazines, fact sheets, white papers, diaries, interviews, and more. Each has value. As you begin your research, it is important to think about where the best information can be found for your topic. Is the topic new? If so, perhaps newspapers, television, and Internet news sources are best. Is it a topic that has been around for a while – long enough to have many articles or books written about it? If so, perhaps the library catalog and full-text article databases are best. Is your topic historic or a study? Is it a literary criticism? If so, books and peer-reviewed articles are best. Of course, the Internet can be carefully used for every topic. Prepare for your research by selecting sources and search terms.

### THINK ABOUT IT

- » Do you need background on your topic or do you already know about it and only need specific information to fill in the gaps?

#### Examples of background are:

1. The history of a subject, such as abortion
2. A chronology of a scientific development, such as cloning
3. Historic information about a company or industry



Finding background about your topic adds to your understanding of a topic, helps you find information about a novel, a health field, or a marketing strategy. Background helps put your subject into proper perspective in today's world. It will help you with the next step of your research.

- » Do you need hard facts, such as statistics, definitions, formulas?
- » Does your topic emphasize historical information or more recent events?
- » Does your topic relate to: Science and technology \_\_\_ Sociology or psychology \_\_\_ History \_\_\_ Literature \_\_\_ Careers \_\_\_ Health and Wellness \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_?

Answer these questions before you begin. Then you will be more likely to choose a variety of appropriate resources in the best possible formats.

## ACCESSING ONLINE RESOURCES FROM OFF-CAMPUS

**The Library web page** is located at <http://www.lonestar.edu/library.htm>. Begin your research here. You will need a library card. You can get one on campus. Your barcode will be put on the back of your picture ID card. If you aren't on campus, apply online. The library staff will mail your card.

**The Library catalog** is available on our web page to search for books, electronic books, videos and other resources the library has for your research. You will find books in Lone Star College-Kingwood Library or one of the four other campus libraries. Books can be borrowed electronically from the other campuses [request first available copy button]. It takes about 2 days for the book to be transferred to Lone Star College-Kingwood Library. You will be called when the book is ready for pick up.

**Library Web Page Assignments & Guides** has research guides for most research projects. These can be found on the research guide web page. Your instructor will let you know if your class has one. Background, themes, helpful hints, resources, and links to databases are listed. You can also email or chat to the librarian from these research guides.

**Subject Guide to Databases** lists databases appropriate for research in specific subject areas. To find articles from journals, magazines and newspapers you will use a database to locate electronic versions of those resources. Think about the best keywords to describe your topic.

## USING A VARIETY OF RESOURCES

Using a variety of types of resources usually results in a better, more credible paper. Use this evaluation grid to help you decide. Research is all about EVALUATION. Everyone knows there is plenty of information. The question is, are you finding the BEST information for your refined topic?

RESOURCES	ADVANTAGES	LIMITATIONS	HINTS FOR USING
<p><b>REFERENCE MATERIAL</b></p> <p>Dictionaries, almanacs encyclopedias, hand-books. Located in reference area. Some are available online</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Good place to start</li> <li>» Brief background</li> <li>» Facts and statistics</li> <li>» Focused summaries</li> <li>» Objective information</li> <li>» Sources available when needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Print references are not published as quickly</li> <li>» Can be difficult to locate a specific topic in a large source</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ask a librarian; they will know the best references for your topic.</li> <li>» Begin at the Research guide to see which sources are suggested</li> </ul>
<p><b>BOOKS</b></p> <p>Can be found in print and electronic format (eBooks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Thorough exploration</li> <li>» Authors are generally experts in the field</li> <li>» Can be checked out</li> <li>» eBooks are ready for use on your computer-cut and paste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Maybe more information than you need for your topic</li> <li>» Books may be already checked out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Use the catalog to find books</li> <li>» Request books electronically from other libraries</li> <li>» eBooks can be searched using keywords</li> <li>» Use the index and contents to find information</li> </ul>
<p><b>DATABASES</b></p> <p>Contain full-text (complete) copies of articles from magazines, journals, and newspapers in electronic format. Use the subject guide to find the best databases for your topic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Good place to start</li> <li>» Brief background</li> <li>» Facts and statistics</li> <li>» Focused summaries</li> <li>» Objective information</li> <li>» Sources available when needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Articles may be brief and specific, but not on your topic</li> <li>» Many 'hits', must use keywords wisely.</li> <li>» Opinions may be emphasized over facts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Use databases linked through the library homepage</li> <li>» Look for Full Text articles – for the whole article.</li> <li>» Use "peer-reviewed" to assure you have scholarly information</li> <li>» You can email articles, print, or save articles.</li> </ul>
<p><b>INTERNET</b></p> <p>The internet is readily available from online computers. Information world-wide. Open to all – which means everyone can 'post' to the Internet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Huge variety of information on almost any topic</li> <li>» Allows access to resources all over the world</li> <li>» Very recent events may be covered</li> <li>» Governmental and organizational sites have excellent statistics and facts.</li> <li>» Find previously inaccessible information at large libraries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Information can be unreliable</li> <li>» Huge number of search results means best resources hard to locate</li> <li>» Some information is incomplete or you must pay for it</li> <li>» Organizations have good information, but it may be difficult to find unless you know what you are looking for.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Several search engines are linked to the library homepage.</li> <li>» Recommended websites are linked to the research guides.</li> <li>» Training may be needed to use effectively and efficiently</li> <li>» Ask the librarian to recommend good sites for your topic, ones you may not find through a Google search.</li> </ul>